



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

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SBA Honors Small Business Contributions of National Champion Award Winners

ORLANDO, Fla. – Administrator Hector V. Barreto of the U.S. Small Business Administration today awarded SBA Champion Awards to 10 small business owners and small business backers from across the country in recognition of their unique and outstanding achievements on behalf of small business. The awards were presented at a luncheon event at SBA Expo '04, the agency's three-day conference celebrating National Small Business Week.

"The people we are honoring today are true champions of small business: lenders, nonprofit advocates, and business owners whose untiring efforts have been a significant boon to small businesses in their communities, their states and across the country," Barreto said. "They have helped provide the tools, the information and the support that small businesses need to become successful, and helped to create an environment in which the spirit of entrepreneurship can thrive."

There are 10 national Champion Award winners. The award winners are recognized for their efforts and excellence in many different aspects of small business. SBA Champions can be but are not limited to, small business owners, supporters of small business, women, minorities, families, exporters, journalists, veterans, or young entrepreneurs.

This year's Champion Awards recognize winners from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, California, Puerto Rico, New York, Kansas, Oklahoma, Montana and Maryland.

The winners are:

Iola M. Carter, Director
The Avenue Project for Mt. Airy USA
Community Development Corporation
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

James G. Crosby, President
Crosby's Markets, Inc.
Salem, Massachusetts

James E. Whitney
Senior Vice President/Manager
of the SBA Loan Division
First State Bank of California
Burbank, California

Lourdes Aponte-Rosario
Founder and President
Hispanic Business Women's Alliance
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Myron A. Keller, Owner
Quality Collision Repair & Service/ Petro Plus
Palco, Kansas

Melissa Hull, Director
New Hope Christian Day Care Inc.
Brooklyn, New York

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Darrell R. Stolhand, President
Rhonda J. Stolhand, Vice President
Stolhand Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.
Ponca City, Oklahoma

Kim Wild
President and General Manager
TowHaul
Belgrade, Montana

Richard A. Vance, President
Robert C. Sharps, Vice President for
Business Development
VSA Construction Services, LLC
Jessup, Maryland

Sergio Velazquez, President
Velazquez Publishing, Inc.
Santa Ana, California

Selected from 100 nomination packages submitted by SBA field offices in their communities, the awardees are being recognized on the basis of having met one or more of the following criteria:

- Demonstrated entrepreneurial potential necessary for long-term business success and economic growth.
- If a small business, evidence of success as measured by sales and profits.
- Voluntary efforts beyond business/professional responsibilities to advance small business interests within the small business community, state and/or nation.
- Support of the small business community as a whole, not solely for individual personal advancement.
- Other accomplishments demonstrating the nominee's effective support of small business.

The SBA has 10 regional offices and 68 district offices throughout the United States. Each regional office chose 10 regional Champion Award winners from their districts to be submitted to SBA headquarters in Washington, D.C. for national consideration.

*For more information about SBA's programs for small businesses, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov. The SBA, in co-sponsorship with Staples, has introduced an online newsletter **SBA Solutions**. For a free subscription, go to <http://web.sba.gov/list> and select New **SBA Solutions Newsletter**.*

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